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STARBURST™

Visual Imagination Publication

THE MAKING OF

BATMAN FOREVER

THE PRODUCER, THE WRITERS AND CHRIS O'DONNELL TALK

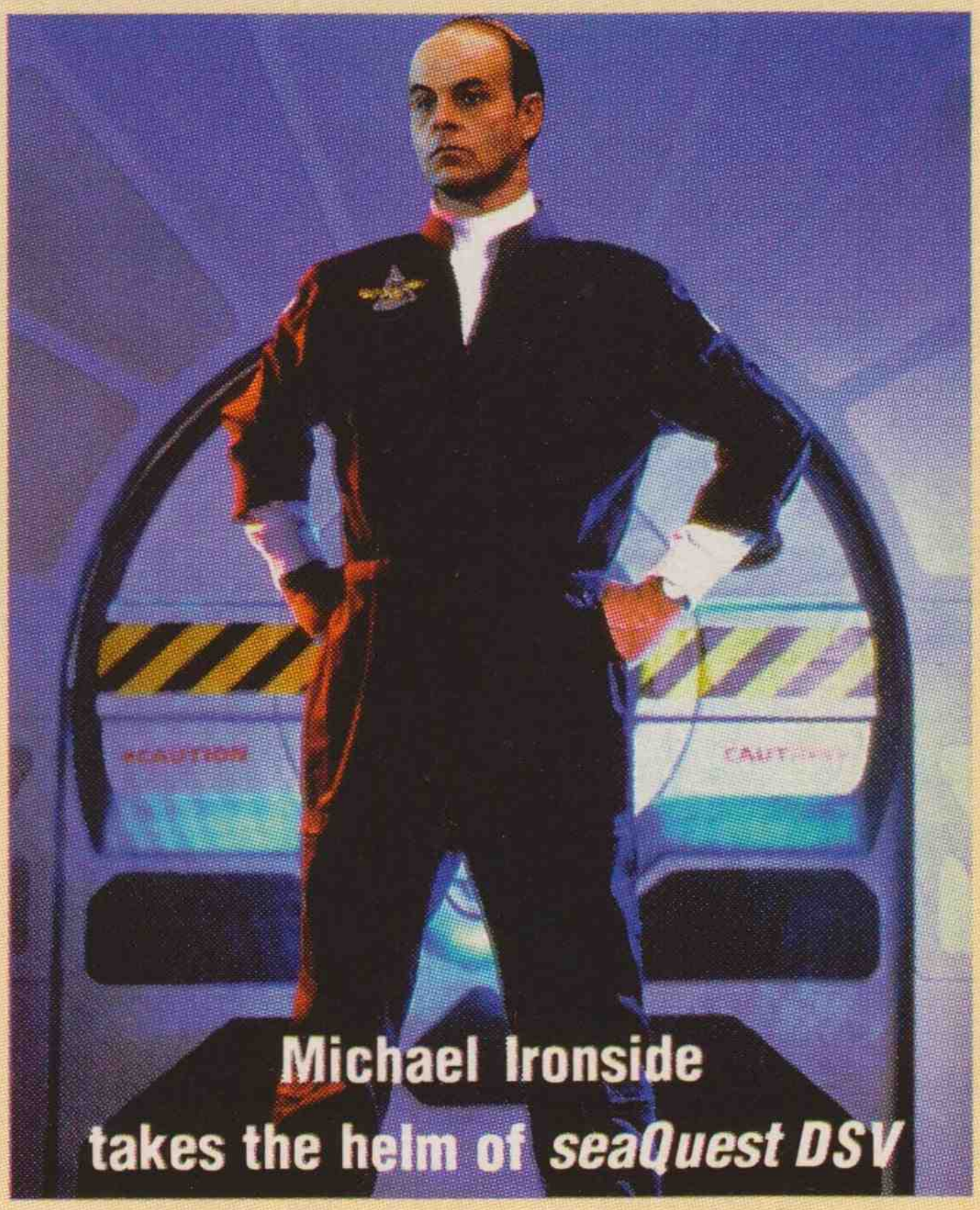
THINGS TO COME

By Michael Courtland & Mike Thomas

Captains Ahoy!

Michael Ironside has pipped Jonathan Frakes and Clancy Brown to take the helm of **seaQuest DSV**'s third season. Ironside, a veteran actor best known to genre fans for his roles in **Total Recall**, **V** and **Highlander 2** will replace leading man Roy Scheider, who will guest star as Admiral Bridger in four or five episodes of the season.

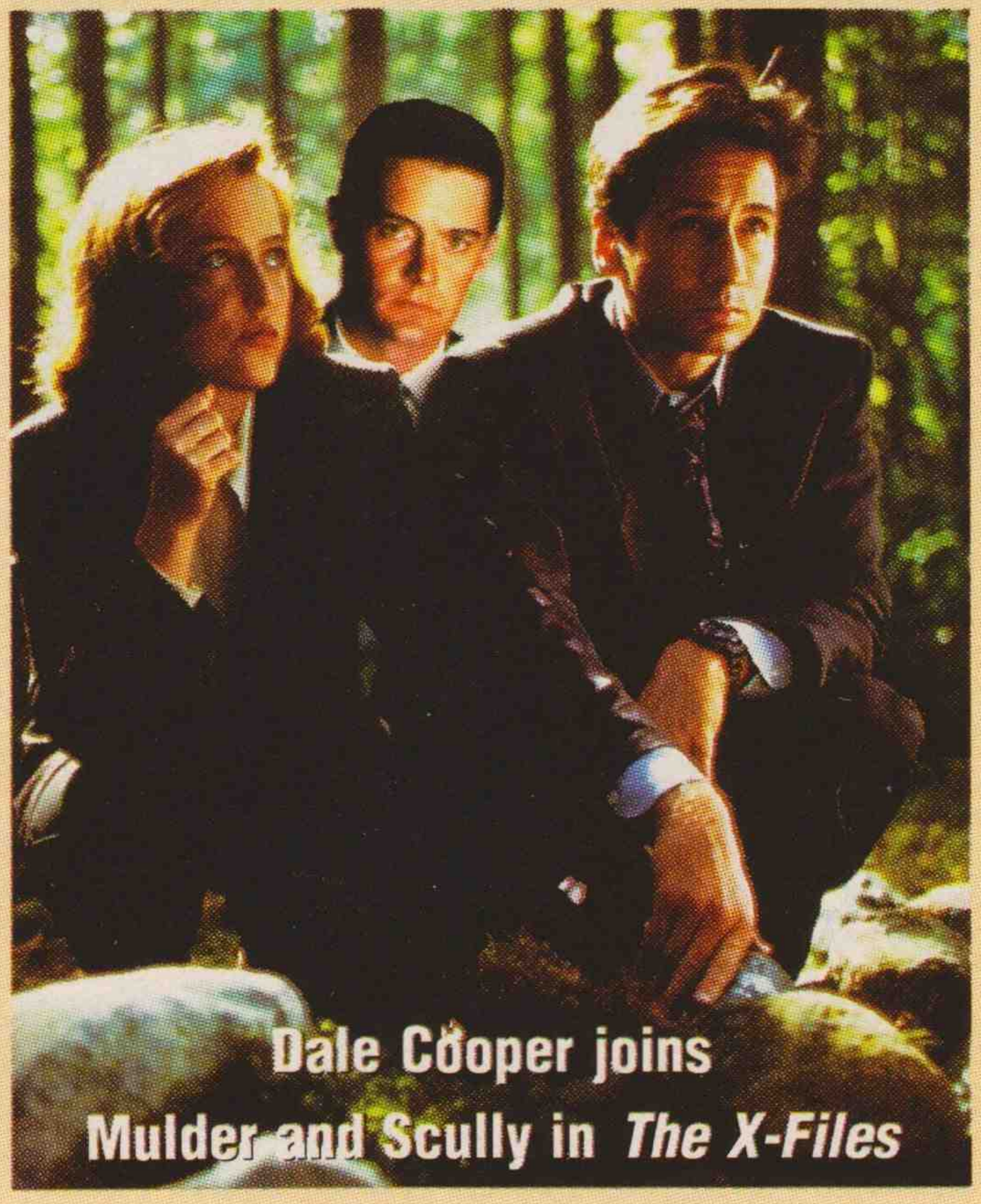
Michael Dorn, however, will not be joining **Deep Space Nine** after all — according to *TV Guide*, Dorn wasn't offered enough money to don Worf's make-up on a daily basis. This, of course, leaves the way clear for Frakes to join the series as Maquis renegade Tom Riker...



Michael Ironside takes the helm of *seaQuest DSV*

X-Files Crossover

Twin Peaks star Kyle McLachlan will reprise his role as Agent Dale Cooper in a two-part story of **The X-Files**, directed by David Lynch. How this third season **X-File** will tie-in with **Twin Peak**'s unresolved finale remains to be seen...



Dale Cooper joins Mulder and Scully in *The X-Files*

Independence!

Jeff '**The Fly**' Goldblum, Bill '**Casper**' Pullman and Will Smith will star in **Independence Day**, which reuintes **StarGate** producer Dean Devlin and director Roland Emmerich. The film depicts an alien invasion of Earth and stars Goldblum as a computer genius, Smith as a jet fighter and Pullman as the US president. It will open Stateside on July 4th, 1996...

Return of Shadows

After all the hype and controversy, the final four episodes of **Babylon 5**'s second season will be aired on Channel 4, some three months ahead of the States, starting July 25th. Viewers not wanting to know about the episodes should not read any further: *The Long, Twilight Struggle*, in which the Narn-Centauri war is con-

BATMAN TRIUMPHANT

"Riddle me this, riddle me that: Who's afraid of the big, black bat?" Sylvester Stallone for one, whose latest movie, **Judge Dredd**, looks set to lose this Summer's battle of the comic-strip blockbusters to **Batman Forever**, which took $77 million during its opening week Stateside and had topped $100 within a fortnight.

While **Batman** was breaking box office records, **Dredd** was desperately struggling to avoid receiving an R rating in the States — the financial kiss of death, as it excludes all under-17s unaccompanied by adults. Director Danny Cannon submitted five different versions of the film to American censors — and each was given a R, so ultimately he decided to release his original version on 30th June.

To make matters worse, Cannon has publicly stated that Stallone was a nightmare to work with and that he wouldn't make another film with him. Somehow, Danny, I don't think *you* will get to make that choice.

Elsewhere, Michael Crichton's latest *Jurassic Lark* **Congo** proved a minor hit, taking $49 million in its first two weeks, while **Casper** has grossed more than $70 million so far.

On the black side, Keanu Reeves's first post-**Speed** outing **Johnny Mnemonic** proved a massive flop, grossing a mere $17 million in its first month, while John Carpenter's much-touted, star-studded remake of **Village of the Damned** proved both a critical and commercial disaster.

As for **Waterworld**, well it's pretty much a forgone conclusion that Kevin Costner's undersea epic won't make a profit — with a budget of around $200 mllion and rising, the film will have to out-gross **Jurassic Park** for Universal to recoup its losses. Dream on fellas...

Batman Forever This Summer's victor at the American box office

A *Starburst* interview by Pat Jankiewicz

PETER MACGREGOR-SCOTT DECLARES

BATMAN FOREVER

Batman Forever The Dark Knight's war against crime in Gotham City continues...

Sequels are supposed to get worse, not better. Happily, that adage is proven wrong with *Batman Forever*, a splashy, flashy comic-book of a movie that meets and beats the expectations upon it.

FOR his third and most action-packed adventure, Batman is pitted against two new foes, schizophrenic Harvey Dent/Two-Face a District Attorney-turned-madman who dispenses 'justice' with the flip of a coin and Edward Nygma, an over-zealous electronics genius who becomes The Riddler.

The Dark Knight is also joined by such allies as Robin, the Boy Wonder, and sultry psychiatrist Chase Meridian. Another friend in Batman's never-ending battle is Peter Macgregor-Scott, who produced **Batman Forever**. In his office on the Warner Brothers backlot, Macgregor-Scott, a tall, gregarious Englishman with a handlebar moustache, discusses crime and punishment in Gotham City.

"I was a big Batman fan as a kid; I just loved him and I think we do him justice with this," he says confidently. "I also wanted to challenge myself. I have a need to constantly improve myself. This **Batman** is absolutely as good as I can make it. Next year, if I made another Batman film, I would try to make it even more different. When we were making the picture, I thought 'I'm never making another one of these!' It's so much work, but the work itself is actually quite exciting. After this, the studio isn't going to ask me to do a script about two guys in a room!"

New Batman

The film-makers also had to face the loss of Batman Michael Keaton. "When Michael decided not to do this, that was the beginning of 'newness' for the film," the producer notes. "At the time, we were a little concerned and somewhat pensive about it. I say to myself as an overview, 'If the guy died, you'd still make the movie', that point of view had served me well in life, if somebody says, 'No, I'm not doing it', then okay, fine, let's go on and make it an advantage, not a disadvantage. In this case, we made it an advantage.

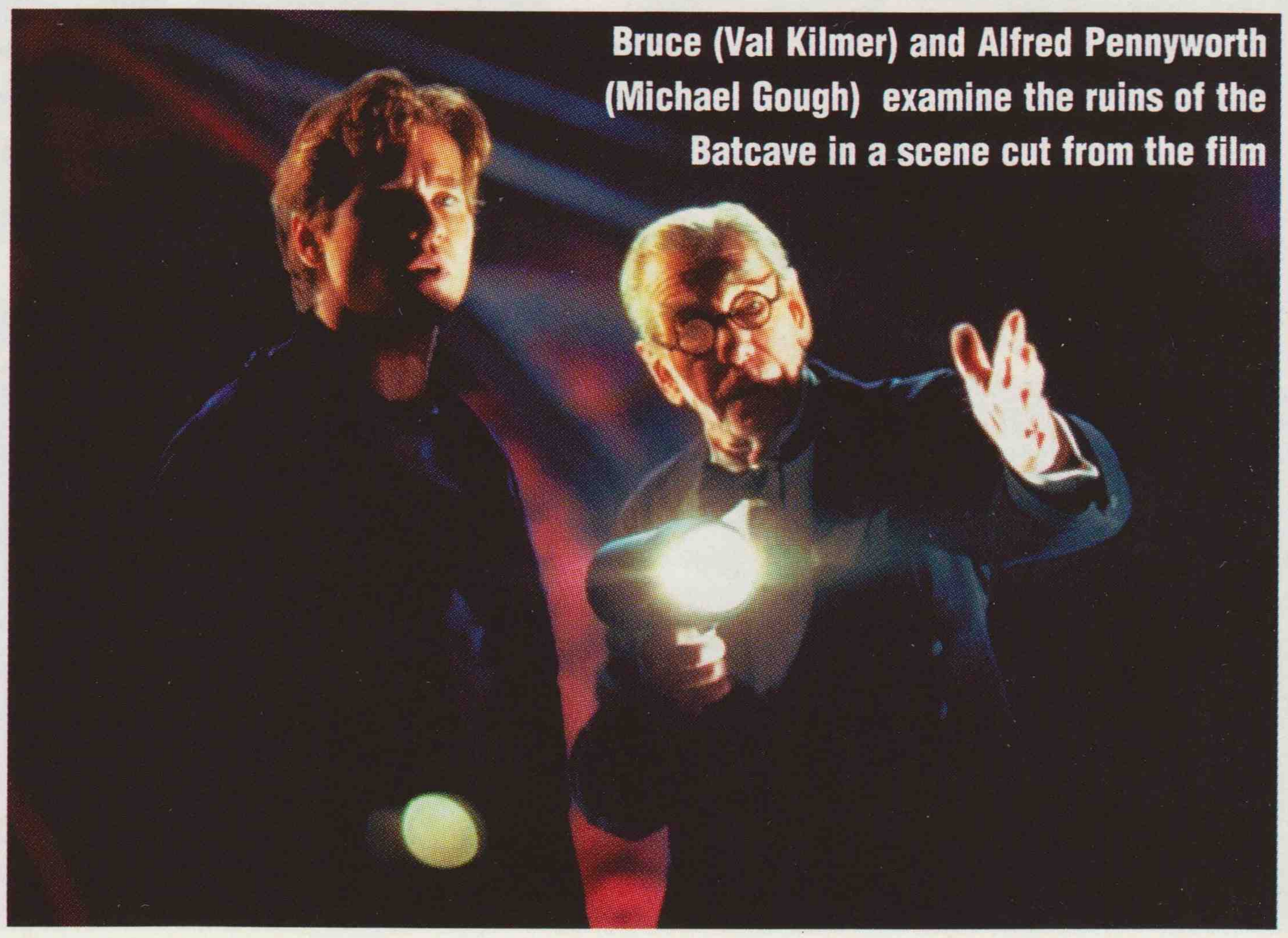
"[Aside from Keaton] Val was really the only other consideration we had for this and when he said he would like to do it, Boom! we were off and running. Val has a fantastic body and looks great in the suit. I don't think viewers will consider that anybody could play Batman better than Val Kilmer," he declares evenly. "It's gonna be Val for as long as he wants to do it."

Even before they had someone to fill the cape, he had a psychotic foe ready to go. "We had Tommy Lee Jones already," Macgregor-Scott reveals. "Tommy had said he was gonna do the movie. I love Tommy Lee; I had also done **Fugitive** and **Under Siege** with him," he grins. "I don't think I can do a movie without him! It may be the same for him too but he does a lot more movies a year than I can. We have a very special relationship.

"I love him as Two-Face. When we sent him the script, he calls me and says, 'I don't get it, I just don't get it'. I said, 'Listen, why don't you re-read the thing and remember that Academy Award winner Tommy Lee Jones is playing the role?' I hung the phone up and he calls back the next morning and says, 'I get it!' When he took the character and put himself into it, he could understand where he was going and that was it, he never lost the

Bruce Wayne — Batman Forever?

Despite Alfred's encouragement to create a dynamic duo, Dick Grayson (Chris O'Donnell) decides to leave Wayne Manor



Bruce (Val Kilmer) and Alfred Pennyworth (Michael Gough) examine the ruins of the Batcave in a scene cut from the film

character for a minute. He just knew how he was going to play the picture."

The film-maker was also pleased to have Batman's junior partner in the film. "Oh, Robin is just great," he enthuses. "I know in the second one they were going to introduce Robin [as a black garage mechanic] but that didn't happen. I'm glad about that because Robin adds a lot of the fun to this one. He and Batman work together well. I can hardly imagine the picture without him!"

Ironically, he also had to face a clamour from comic-book fans who noticed that Batman is now sporting Bat Nipples on his armour. "The nipples were just a silly little thing," he notes. "The Batsuit looks better with the nipples! I mean, the whole uproar over the nipples was a storm in a teacup. They don't talk about them anymore now that people have seen the movie. In the whole scheme of Batman, they're such a small thing.

"Frequently what happens, I find people talk about a film they haven't seen as though they have seen it. We had a situation where there was a news report back in early September — before we started shooting last year — that there were disagreements between Jim Carrey and Val Kilmer, but *they had never even met each other yet*!

"Val was coming over from Africa and Jim was doing something else, so it was just ridiculous. We told the press, 'You only have disagreements with people after you meet them!' The reality is, we make our movies on time and on price. It's a business, a vocation that we love. I've worked with a lot of potentially difficult artists but I've never had a problem in my life."

Relentless Riddler

He has nothing but praise for his rambunctious Riddler. "Jim is just marvellous and funny as Edward Nygma. Jim is also very sharp; his management called me up and say, 'Jim wants to practise with a cane'. [The Riddler carries a large, question mark-shaped cane.] I say 'Okay'. We find this guy who's an old vaudevillian and Jim worked with him for only two two-hour meetings but when you look at the movie, he's effortless with that cane. His Riddler is relentless. In two lessons, he had the cane down and the way he works with that cane is beyond belief!"

Born in Maidenhead ("It was a town that used to be 30 miles outside London but London has grown so much, now it's only 15 miles!"), Macgregor-Scott's grandfather owned the prestigious Rialto Cinema. "I'm 47 years old and I've been in the business 31 years," he notes. "I left school when I was 15. My father was a distributor in the picture business, his company owned Associated British Studios, so he got me a job there."

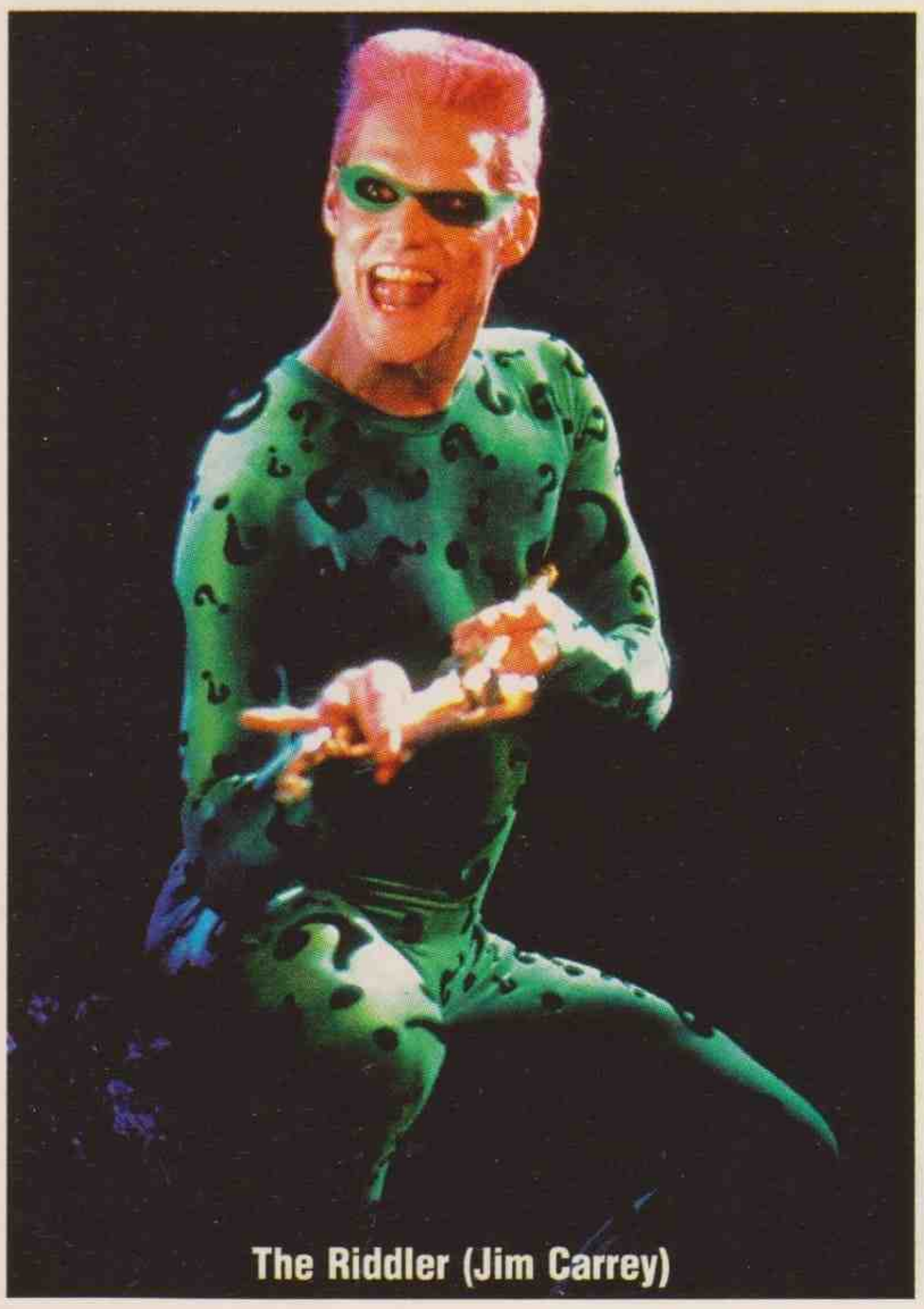
After numerous odd jobs at the studio, he used "it as a training ground where I was taught how to make films. I actually came to the States chasing a girl who was

Two-Face Dent (Tommy Lee Jones)

Batman patrols Gotham City

emigrating here. I said I was only gonna be here in the US for two weeks and that was 15 years ago! I had a few advantages; my father's company had a head office here and I knew people there so I wasn't going completely alone."

While producing the low-budget action movie **Ride the Tiger**, "I also acted in it. We couldn't find a villain, so I'm the villain! I had long hair in it and wore these octagonal glasses that I never take off in the movie, which upset my mother! We finished shooting a scene in **Batman Forever**, I come home at 2.30 am and there's **Ride the Tiger** playing on TV!"



The Riddler (Jim Carrey)

From Animals to Batman

After producing "a series of low-budget action pictures", he produced **Animal House**, the highest-grossing comedy of all time. He was offered **Batman** "because I had done five or six films like **Under Siege**, which was a hugely successful action film. [Warner Brothers] saw it and said, 'Wow, those two idiots — the director [Andrew Davis] and myself, could be something really special'.

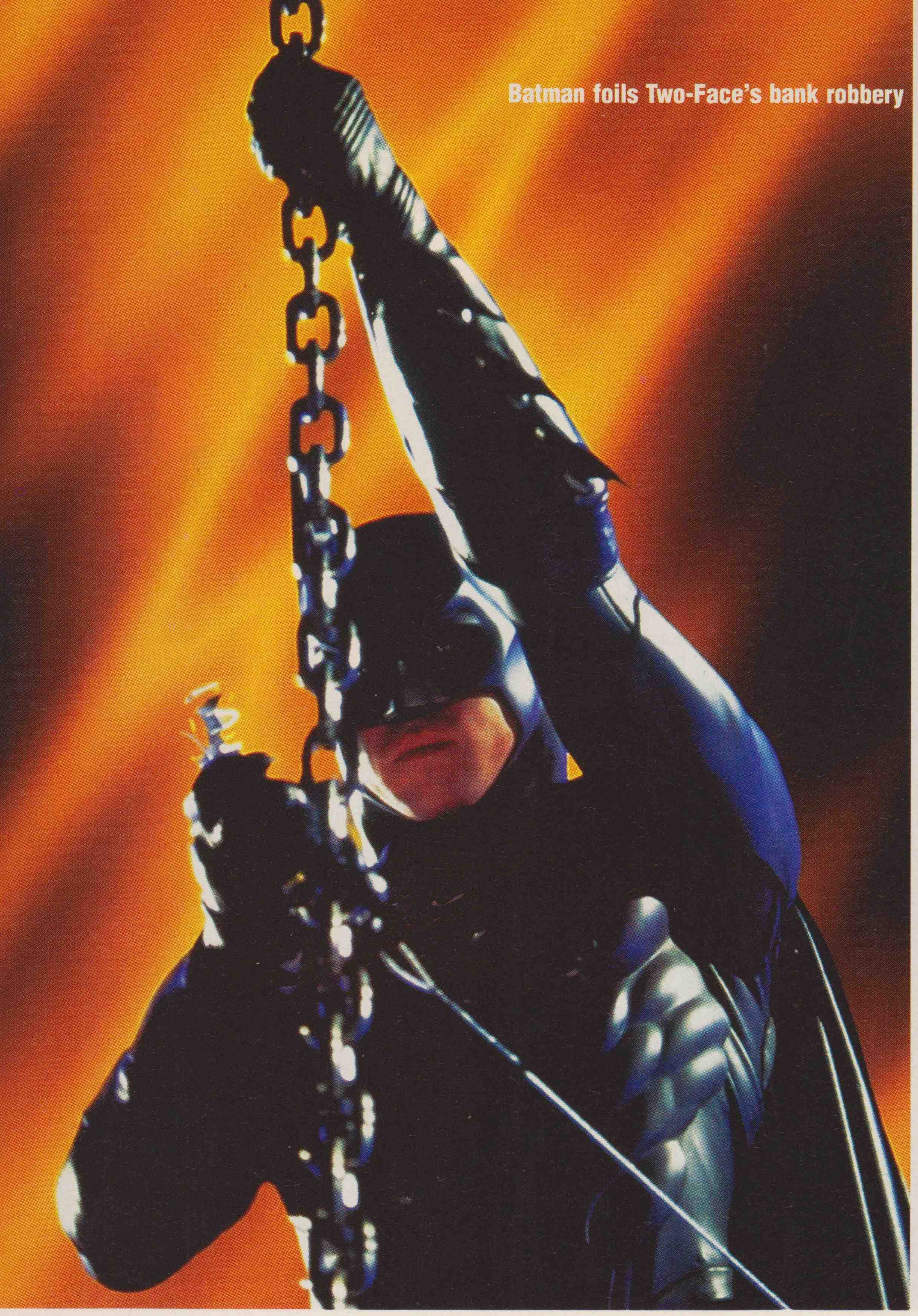
"Andy Davis calls me and says, 'Look, they're gonna send us this script, **The Fugitive**'. I said, 'Oh, really? Sounds great!' I'm sitting in my garage when the script arrives the next morning. I thought 'I'll read it' but I wasn't gonna read it that minute. Our executive calls an hour and a half later and says, 'So what do you think?' I said, 'For God's sake, I haven't read it yet'. He says, 'Listen: it's 'Harrison Ford is the Fugitive'. You wanna do it?' I said, 'Yes!' I jumped on a plane and we went right into production. [Warner Brothers presidents] came to the London première of **The Fugitive** and said, 'Listen, we want you to do **Batman**!'"

The director was chosen carefully. "Joel was doing **The Client** and the studio asked him to take a meeting with the two chairmen of Warner Brothers, Bob Daly and Terry Semel. They said to him, 'We want to give you our largest franchise'. Joel jokes that he thought they were giving him Mel Gibson!

"They decided Joel was the perfect mix for the third **Batman**. He would bring visually exciting qualities; in the art department, costumes and casting... His casting abilities are amazing. He would also have 'the spin', to use a hackneyed Hollywood term, to spin it into something totally fresh, which is what this needed.

"Joel gets offered the job and I went to meet with him. Joel asked me, 'Why do you want to do **Batman**?' I said, 'On your tombstone, there's only room for a few films and that's gotta be one of them!' At the end of the day, that's one of the ones I want on there. I've done 84 movies, so I have to be selective!"

The film is considerably more bouncy and fun than its predecessors, particularly the grim **Batman Returns**. "I had a problem with the second one, myself. I have a 7-year-old son who loves Batman and I



Batman foils Two-Face's bank robbery

Bruce encourages Dick to stay at Wayne Manor

Two-Face uses a policeman as bait for the Bat

must tell you, I thought **Batman Returns** was a little gruesome and very dark, especially The Penguin. Tim Burton is a genius, but he has a very bizarre reality if you look at his work.

"**Edward Scissorhands** is a masterpiece, but your head has to be in a very strange place for that kind of stuff. I don't mean that in a negative way but in a positive way. I don't think Tim Burton wanted to do another Batman, I think he did the second one and said, 'That's it; I've serviced that, I don't think I could take it any further'. I think he did a really magical job on the first one.

"For **Batman Forever**, the studio wanted new management. They said, 'Here's the idea: There's this guy called Batman, he's in a rubber suit, you start with that. You've got Tommy Lee Jones, get some other villains and come up with something absolutely new.' I think we achieved that," he states.

Influences

One notices a lot of the film feels influenced by the excellent **Batman: The Animated Series**. Was this deliberate? "Not for me and I don't think for Joel, either. The comic book itself was our inspiration; you always go back to the master manuscript and that helped us a great deal. Without being historically perfect, we made an entertaining movie based on the DC character Batman.

"I loved the Adam West TV series. The '60s show had a little influence on Michael Gough, who plays Alfred. He's absolutely spectacular. Michael Gough is one of the sweetest guys in the world, he's an amazing fellow. He has such heart and soul as a human being that translates into the film. You feel for this guy Alfred all of the time." **Forever** re-casts Alfred in the Q role from James Bond. He's funny and invents Batman and Robin's weapons and Bat Armour.

Not only will everything look different from the previous Bat films, but it will sound different as well. To get the unique roar of the Batmobile, "Our sound guys went up to Rocketdyne [rocket makers], and Rocketdyne said, 'Sorry, but we don't allow film companies here'. Our guys said, 'We're doing the new Batman movie and we're creating the sound for the Batmobile...' Rocketdyne said, 'Come on in, boys!' They let us record their rocket.

"It's phenomenal," Macgregor-Scott says triumphantly. "It makes part of the Batmobile sound. We have approximately 60 tracks for the Batmobile alone. We wanted it to sound and feel right. Sound is a big element of the movie. If you can, see it in a first-class house with a digital format! You feel like you're riding inside the Batmobile!"

As for his favourite scene, Macgregor-Scott muses, "That's a tough one. I like the showdown in The Riddler's lair a lot. I also like the scene where Batman must go down a tunnel to save [Robin and his girlfriend]. I really enjoy the Batboat

Dr Chase Meridian (Nicole Kidman) is torn between two men: Bruce Wayne and Batman

Having discovered Batman's secret identity, The Riddler enters the Batcave

chase. I do a lot of second unit stuff, so I did all the boat and Batmobile chase.

"I also did the Batwing. That was interesting; the Batwing is partly miniatures and partly live-action. We did the whole attack on The Riddler's island in Long Beach, right off the Queen Mary. I'm very involved," he laughs. "We had somebody directing the train crash in **The Fugitive** and I had gone and placed all the cameras the day before. I came back to shoot, and the big production cameras had been moved back. I said, 'What happened here? Who moved the camera back? F*** this! The camera's going right here!' That's how I work; I have a very clear idea in my head of how it has to be.

"I think about it for months, 12 hours a day, and when somebody comes in to change it who has only given it six minutes of thought? I don't work that way. I'm open to discussion for the common benefit but I do very big action scenes and I have an ability to see them through. I know how we're going to achieve the sequence. Like the scene in Batman Forever where he drives the Batmobile up a wall... I had it in my head."

Haunted by tragedies past and present, Bruce Wayne questions his future as Batman

Trials and Triumphs

Batman Forever is loaded with action. The first 15 minutes have more thrills than the climax to **Die Hard 3**. One wonders what the hardest scene was to shoot. "Inside the safe," he grimaces. "Two-Face traps Batman and a security guard inside a bank safe that he fills with acid and drags beneath a helicopter. It was horrible!

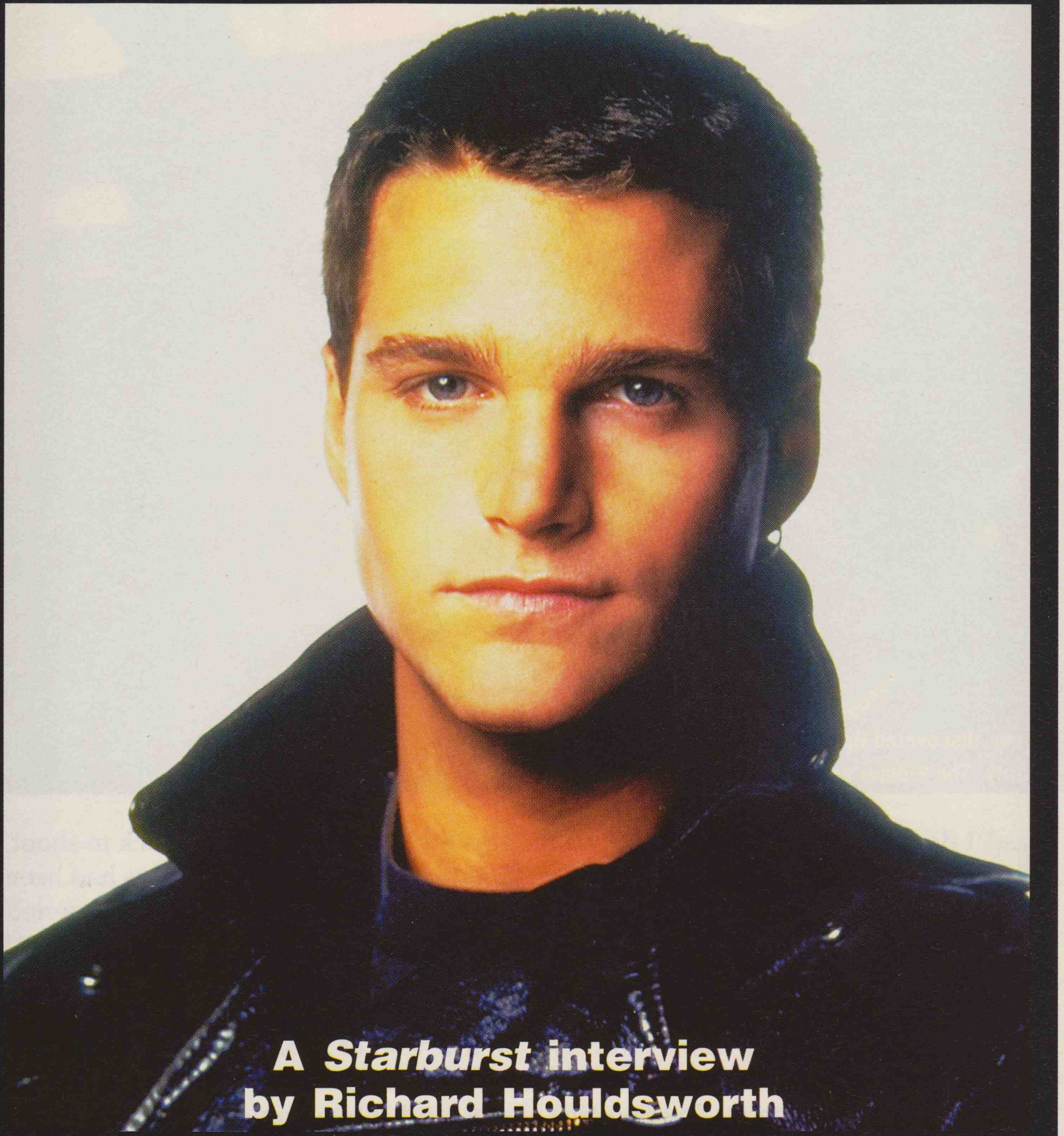
"That was the most difficult, cramped thing. If I was going to re-do it, I would have to re-design the safe and I still don't think I could get it right. We were filming in the safe for probably 11 days. Not just the main unit, but the second unit and the miniature unit, trying to get the water to come up... It was a horrible scene to do, really cramped. It was very difficult to shoot inside of a safe swinging across Gotham City."

Batman Forever also marks the first time the Bat films shot in New York, Batman creator Bob Kane's inspiration for Gotham. "A lot of it is really New York and a lot of it is computer generated," he says proudly. "For example, the Ritz-Gotham, where Bruce Wayne and Chase go to the Edward Nygma party, that is a real building. You see the cars coming into it, and then we pan up the building. We put 60 storeys on top of this building! It's phenomenal; New York is partly real, partly miniature and part CGI."

The producer is happy everyone seems to be happy with his Batman. Everybody but one... "My 7-year-old son Taylor is a major Bat fan; I gave him some **Batman Forever** toys the other day but he said, 'Dad, what about the Batsuit? Can you get me the suit?' I said, 'It wouldn't fit you'," Peter Macgregor-Scott chuckles. "'Batman's a very big guy, I don't think you could wear his suit!'"

ROBIN RETURNS

Not only has director Joel Schumacher reinvented the whole *Batman* franchise with *Batman Forever*, he has also succeeded in redefining the career of Chris O'Donnell.



A *Starburst* interview by Richard Houldsworth

THE blond haired, blue-eyed Hollywood heart-throb is best known for appearing as nice young college kids in films such as **Scent of a Woman**, **School Ties** and **Circle of Friends**. However, those kind of roles could soon be behind him after playing wild child Dick Grayson has demonstrated his ability to tackle tougher, more streetwise characters.

The Dick Grayson of **Batman Forever** is no all American boy who slips on green tights and silk cape when he transforms into Robin. This adolescent has an ear-ring, drives a motorbike and wears a leather jacket in his off-duty hours, while his caped crusader outfit is muscle-shaped body armour.

"I'm actually pretty into spandex, let me tell you!" laughs the actor when quizzed about his Robin costume. "You really do feel like a superhero: you put on these muscle costumes and you walk out onto the set and you've got these giant sets around you."

Chris O'Donnell was offered the role by Joel Schumacher, who was determined to steer the character of Robin away from the innocent young puritan portrayed in the TV series.

"The opportunity to play a character that I'd grown up with was really exciting," Chris enthuses. "It was like getting paid to play around the way I did when I was a little kid, with friends coming over and having battles in the basement.

"The story in the movie is very similar to the comic. He comes from the circus, his family were performers in the circus. It's in keeping with that, and like everything in the Batman movies it's very different to the TV show."

When Dick is the only member of the Flying Graysons performing family to survive Two-Face's attack on the circus, the teenager is taken under the wing of Bruce Wayne, who recognizes a kindred spirit.

"I think anybody is undoubtedly vulnerable when their whole family gets killed," the actor continues. "But Dick, especially when he transforms into Robin, is not a vulnerable person. His reaction to what happens is not only natural, but active, forceful, driven and strong."

While acknowledging that there is definitely some meat on the bones with the character of Robin, Chris reveals that making an action Fantasy like **Batman Forever** presented a whole new challenge after his previous experience on more character-oriented films.

"The thing is, making a movie like that it's not real life at all," he says. "Most of the time you spend the day just choreographing fights or getting in and out of the Batmobile. That's what you do for the entire day, and sometimes for an actor that's not as satisfying as working on a film like **Circle of Friends** where you get to spend a lot of time getting into scenes with some real dialogue and some real emotion. With someone like Robin, half the time you're hiding behind a mask."

Nevertheless, he's delighted about his association with the Dark Knight, and is already signed up to partner Val Kilmer again in the next sequel. But before that we will see him again in **Mad Love**, in which he hits the road with Drew Barrymore, who plays Two-Face's sweet sidekick in **Batman Forever**. And this time around the best of enemies become more than the best of friends...

A *Starburst* interview by Pat Jankiewicz

BATCHLERS FOREVER

Dynamic Duo Lee and Janet Scott Batchler are basking in the glory of Batman's latest and greatest adventure.

THE charming husband and wife team have an almost telepathic bond in the way they complete each other's thoughts and sentences. Their personal and professional relationship began after they "met at a *Dungeons and Dragons* game!"

They succeeded where others failed by giving **Batman** an exciting cast of characters and unusual situations. It doesn't have a dull moment.

"Having Batman in a bigger role was important to us," Lee states. "We also wanted more Bruce Wayne. With Bruce and Batman, you're writing one side of him and then switching over and writing the other side of his personality. Batman is heroic and stands for something. We enjoy writing someone with conviction and the courage to stand up for it.

"Batman has a purpose which he tries to impart on Robin and Robin just doesn't get it. He gets the idea that it's okay to go after bad guys, but he doesn't understand the price you have to pay to have this life. Bruce tries to warn him that it's tough to handle."

Twisted Minds

They came up with the wild plot for **Batman Forever** "because we have twisted minds," Janet jokes. "Once we settled with Joel [Schumacher, the film's director] and Tim [Burton, who serves as producer] on who the villains would be, that really helped give us direction. People griped that in the first two **Batman**s the villains had taken control of the movies, but, in a lot of ways, Batman is a reflection of his villains."

Lee feels "the single idea that drove our approach was to assign a villain for each half of Bruce Wayne's personalities. That had never been done before. The Riddler is *Bruce Wayne's* nemesis, not Batman's and that really helped us."

"We realized early on that Batman is really about duality," Janet reveals. "If you look at Superman, Superman may be Clark Kent but Lex Luthor is always Lex Luthor, Lois Lane is always Lois Lane and Jimmy Olsen is always Jimmy Olsen. But in **Batman** everybody has a split; Batman is Bruce, Robin is Dick, the Catwoman is Selina Kyle, there's an incredible split to everybody. That was attractive to us and to Joel and to Tim Burton as well.

"We were pitching our story to Tim and started off by saying 'Batman is about duality' and he just said 'Yes!' We knew we had him, so we had to get Joel; the duality intrigued us. We knew they wanted two villains, and having one villain for each side was very intriguing."

Creating The Riddler from scratch "was fun because there is no origin in the comics for The Riddler," Lee states. "By deciding he's Bruce Wayne's enemy, that dictated for us what his logical origin should be. He's someone who worked for Wayne Enterprises and had this worshipful attitude towards Bruce Wayne."

The Riddler is an obsessed fan of Bruce. "These personalities are out there — 'Fans' come from the word 'Fanatic' and they worship these stars until they get snubbed and then they stalk them," Lee explains. "That's what Edward Nygma is."

"When he says, 'You were supposed to understand... I will make you understand!' Jim Carrey got every ounce out of that line," Janet states. "It was great. He was a really fun character to write. Warner Brothers wanted to 'lighten it up', so once you've picked Riddler as one of your villains, in a lot of ways, you've lightened it up right there. He's not really homicidal like some of the others are, he's a game player!"

"Jim Carrey brings a lethal edge to it but he's ultimately a puzzler," Lee concurs. "He doesn't want the game to be over. At one point he tells Harvey Two-Face, 'Don't kill him, not yet', because he wants to keep Batman alive to play with. A cat will chase a mouse, claw it, push it around. It will die and the cat is disappointed that the

Robin returns, courtesy of Chris O'Donnell

Edward Nygma's plans are scuppered by his idol, Bruce Wayne

Bruce and Chase Meridian explore Nygmatech

mouse ran down and died. The Riddler doesn't want Batman to run down; he's not through playing with him."

As for the hideously half-scarred Harvey Two-Face, "We do his origin right out of the comics, he was interesting to write; in fact, if they ever bring him back, I would like to see more of both sides of Harvey Dent's personality. What we saw of manic side was great, but I would like to see that logical side a little bit more."

Lee also feels that Two-Face "was played a little more manic and comically than we intended, but it worked. In the world of Batman, there's a number of interpretations you can take with the same basic material and it still works."

The Batchlers were sent to Gotham City on the strength of their script **Smoke and Mirrors**, about famed magician Houdin. It was almost shot last year until star Sean Connery became ill. "It was a heartbreak. We were in the depths of depression until Warner Brothers said, 'How about Batman?' It just landed at our doorstep," Lee marvels.

Before **Batman Forever**, their previous work was for the TV show **The Equalizer** and children's video. "We had done a little bit of writing for TV, just to pay the bills. We got to a point where we said, 'Let's write the kind of movie we'd like to see — something we'd stand in line for!' **Batman Forever** is our first produced screenplay," Janet laughs. "We sit back and say, 'Okay, we've peaked!' Our first movie and it's all downhill from here!"

Live-action Comic Strip

It was easy for them to come up with **Batman Forever**, Janet admits, "because it's a comic book, so you just let your imagination go. Joel Schumacher [the director] is such a visualist, with many ideas. He talked about wanting to get Batman 'active and out of a soundstage'."

"Batman is a very appealing character," Janet notes. "He has a lot of depth. In all the brouhaha over the new casting, we didn't understand what the problem was because I think this is a character who's interesting enough that it's interesting to see different people play him. How many people have played Hamlet? We just saw Ralph Fiennes on Broadway as Hamlet and he was amazing but it doesn't mean we're never gonna see *Hamlet* again."

Does she prefer Kilmer's Dark Knight to Keaton's. "It's a really tough call. I really like Val Kilmer; I like him very much, but I saw the original **Batman** movie on TV the other day and I thought 'Maybe we've forgotten how good Michael Keaton was'. But I think Val is terrific. He looks terrific as Batman... I think he looks terrific as anything," the young writer blushes. "He really took us inside Bruce Wayne in some really interesting ways."

"Val takes a cooler approach," Lee states. "What I liked about Michael Keaton's approach is you occasionally saw the flash of psychosis inside the man. It's a hotter performance, there's more heat, more burning behind the eyes. With Val, you sense that there's something buried deep controlling him, not as close to the surface. When we watched Val perform a couple times, I was not that impressed because it looked like he wasn't doing anything. When I looked at the dailies, I saw that he was doing a tremendous amount, he just made it look so easy!"

Batman Forever finally brings the Caped Crusader's junior partner, Robin the Boy Wonder, to the big screen in a realistic way. "[Warner Brothers] tried to bring Robin into the earlier movies as a black, 14-year-old garage mechanic, but they put that by the wayside," Lee reveals.

"We had a lot of fun creating Robin. I think the key thing that made him work was to make Harvey Two-Face responsible for Robin's parents' deaths. In the

Alfred features heavily in *Batman Forever* because Lee and Janet Scott Batchler are "big Michael Gough fans"

comics, the parents are killed by an extortionist hitting the circus.

"When we talked with Joel, he said, 'Let's put the characters in the same room and see what happens'. So we put Harvey Two-Face in the same room as Robin and that's why their stories have a relationship."

"We wanted to honour the myth as it was created in the comic books," Janet professes. "So aside from making Harvey Two-Face the bad guy in Robin's life, we really wanted his origin to be there. We also made him more of a 1990s kid. Our personal assistant Darlene grew up in the circus as a high-wire performer, just like Robin.

"Knowing her background, we knew how tough and independent our Dick Grayson had to be. He lost his parents, so he would not want to be taken in and given charity by anyone. He has an attitude and Joel wanted to make him tough as well.

"Bruce Wayne is part of Robin's story from the very beginning," says Janet. "The circus brings them together. At the end of the circus, Bruce's life is changed because he's decided to take in this boy who has lost his parents. Dick's life is changed forever because his family is gone and he has to deal with it. In the space of five minutes, they started out strangers but are now linked. Bruce says, 'I won't let you follow in my footsteps!' but ultimately, the gravitational pull is so strong, they have got to end up as Batman and Robin.

"The casting of Chris O'Donnell was just brilliant," she declares. "He's now going to be on thousands of 14-year-old girls' bulletin boards! I think he's a great actor and he gives a really subtle performance. In a lot of ways, I think he's really the heart of the movie, emotionally."

"I totally agree — without Robin, I don't think the movie would hold together," Lee states. "What he calls upon Bruce and Batman is an obligation; Bruce can mislead him or lead him.

"It also draws upon the parallels of what happened in his own life and the direction that made him take. It forces him to question the path he's taken; is it right to take somebody else down that path? It raises some interesting questions for Bruce."

Love interest

Batman's girlfriend, Dr Chase Meridian, is also interesting. "As soon as we centred on the theme of the movie, it was just a matter of fitting the love interest into the theme," Janet explains. "That seemed obvious to us; to delve into Batman's dual identity with somebody who does that for a living... Chase is a psychiatrist who specializes in the lethally disturbed!"

Of course, this Gotham City police psychiatrist dresses in tight cocktail dresses and uses the Bat-signal to set up dates with the Dark Knight. "Joel said he wanted to create a world where that's what psychiatrists looked like," she giggles. "We also wanted to create a love interest that was smart enough for both Bruce and Batman. It's really easy to give superheroes bimbos as girlfriends, it happens a lot. One of the things I really like about Batman is how smart he is; we wanted to give him someone who would be his equal."

Lee feels that "Nicole [Kidman, who plays Chase] did a wonderful job accentuating the sensuousness of the character. That's much more than what was written. We wrote stuff that we intended to be done almost as flirting, but she made it very clear that she wasn't playing any games. That was all in her performance, it was our script word-for-word."

The film's title, **Batman Forever**, is actually an important line from the film. "Joel didn't want to call it **Batman 3**, he had a whole list of titles, like **Batman Triumphant**," Janet reveals. "I think the title came out of the concept that Batman has an identity crisis to resolve and the

Lee Batchler loves the scene in which the villains destroy the Batcave

question is, as The Riddler states it, 'Can Batman and Bruce ever exist together?' If they can't, then somebody is in trouble. Bruce is able to resolve the identity crisis to the point where he's able to be 'Batman forever!'"

The writers were happy to write for the entire Batman family, particularly "Alfred, he's wonderful! High on Janet and I's wish list was that the same actor would play Alfred, because in both of the films, Michael Gough exuded such dignity and caring for Bruce. Both of those films were a lot harder-edged in terms of darkness and Alfred was the one figure who was good through and through. There's such evil lurking about, you really need that. Besides," Lee grins, "We're big Michael Gough fans!"

Commissioner Gordon also returns. "We're really glad they decided to stick with those two actors because it gives it a continuity. Otherwise, it might be too much that was too new."

One of the joys of the film is seeing Batman run headlong into inescapable death-traps and then somehow escaping them. "That's where our old Dungeons and Dragons stuff comes in to use," Janet smiles. "We also wanted to show people stuff that they hadn't seen before. With each Batman movie, it gets harder."

Lee feels, "Those kind of death-traps are from the comic in the '40s. I remember a story where Penguin hangs them upside down on so they could die a slow death of the blood rushing to their heads. Batman manages to free himself and Robin, of course. They were always getting to get into these kinds of nefarious traps."

"It's also reminiscent of the old Adam West TV show," Janet confides. "It was on two nights a week and we were left with a cliffhanger at each show."

Death-Traps

As for their favourite death-trap, Lee prefers the opening. "It's been a little simplified from the original script, but when Batman climbs under Two-Face's helicopter and it takes off and swooshes though Gotham in and out of skyscrapers, trying to dislodge Batman.

"Harvey smashes him against buildings, the road — Batman bounces off windshields and finally flies him into these animated billboards. They were cut down to just one. Janet has Harvey send the helicopter into the Statue of Liberty ['Lady Gotham' in the film]. I hope everybody notices that it's the left side of Lady Gotham that gets scarred, just like Harvey's own face!"

One of the most shocking scenes comes when the villains discover Batman's secret identity and attack Wayne Manor. "I really love the invasion of the Batcave," Lee confides. "For the villains to actually get inside Batman's lair which is so secret and then to actually destroy the Batmobile which everybody loves, is a real violation. You can't get more personal than that."

The Batchlers are currently working on a prequel to **20,000 Leagues Under the Sea** entitled **Captain Nemo** and hope that their scripts for both **Static** and **Smoke and Mirrors** will reach the big screen. As for the prospect of **Batman 4**, the couple shrug and say, "That's so hypothetical! First and foremost, we'd have to see if Joel was directing again. **Batman 3** came out of nowhere and **Batman 4** probably wouldn't get started for a year, so we'll just focus on what's on our plate right now."

For now, the writing team is basking in their victory. "We have a little boy, Corin, he's only one. His birthday was yesterday so he had a Batman cake and he was trying to eat the little plastic Batman on his cake," Lee and Janet Batchler laugh. "He's working on saying 'Dada' and 'Mama' and we're getting him very confused because now we go around asking him, 'Can you say Batman?'